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Chicago cops got CIA training, Senate unit told

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WASHINGTON — Former CIA director Richard Helms told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee

Wednesday that the Chicago Police Department was one of the participants in an agency training program for local law enforcement officials.

Helms' closed-door and classified testimony conflicted with denials issued on Tuesday by Chicago police spokesmen.

It was not possible to learn the extent of

CIA training received by Chicago police, but another high-ranking former official of the spy agency said in an interview that he remembered some Chicago policemen attending training sessions at the CIA's super-secret facility at Camp Perry, near Williamsburg, Va., either in late 1967 or early 1968.

It was unclear whether Helms and the other former CIA man, who asked to remain anonymous, were referring to the same training session.

In Chicago, police officials in a position to know denied that members of the Chicago Police Department had received CIA training.

"We've been offered the privilege of attending some CIA seminars, but we've never sent anyone," one police official said.

Another police official said that the CIA last year provided the department with the chemical formula for a substance that could determine whether human skin had come in

contact with metal during the 72-hour period preceding such a test.

The chemical formula was turned over to the department's crime laboratory, but lab officials said they have not developed the test further.

The CIA acknowledged on Tuesday giving "briefings" to "less than 50" policemen from "about a dozen" departments "within the past two years."

The agency would not identify the departments and would not say whether Chicago was one. Police in Washington D.C., its suburbs of Fairfax County, Va., and Montgomery County, Md., and New York City acknowledged that their departments had participated.

The training covered organization of intelligence files, use of security devices and procedures including detection of wiretaps, street surveillance technique and handling of explosive devices.

Helms told the Senate committee that he believed police training was not forbidden by the 1947 National Security Act, which bars the CIA from domestic police activities, and was authorized by the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control Act, which encourages federal agencies to assist local police.

At least two members of the committee, chairman J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.) and Sen. Charles H. Percy (R-Ill.), expressed disagreement, but neither indicated that he would hold up Helms' nomination to be ambassador to Iran over the matter.

Both senators said that they believed the police program had violated the spirit of the 1947 law, whose intent they interpreted to be restricting the agency to activities outside the United States. An aide to another senator said it might be necessary to write an amendment into the 1968 law excluding the CIA from participating in aid to local police.

Percy was the senator who asked Helms about Chicago's involvement, it was learned, but Percy refused to say in an interview what

Helms' answer was. "We were in executive session," he said, "and what occurred there was classified."

Percy did say that "after listening to (Helms') testimony, I am convinced that this was a miniscule program, that no request came to the agency from any other branch of government launching the program, that the briefings and training program could be done just as well by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and that then there would be no conflict with the '47 law and the crime bill."

He said, "It would be best for the CIA to transmit any technical information it might possess to the FBI, which could carry on training programs for local police, as it does and is supposed to do."

Percy said, "There shouldn't be any possibility or chance that the CIA would get into domestic activities" and he said that he would take the police-training issue up with

Helms' newly confirmed successor, James R. Schlesinger.

Fulbright said that Helms had portrayed the police training program as "perfectly legitimate." Asked if he understood that such programs would continue, Fulbright said, "As far as I know, I guess so."

Percy said that he thought the CIA would "cease and desist" when advised of the committee's objections and that it would not be necessary to write new legislation forbidding such activity.